

open lands

news from the Jackson Hole Land Trust

WINTER 2010

*Protecting a Place of
Spiritual Renewal*



Dubois

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RING LAKE RANCH:

a longstanding place for renewal



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In the foothills of the Wind River Mountains lies the Torrey Creek Valley. Within this glacier-sculpted valley sits Ring Lake Ranch. Over time the ranch has been a home for spiritual renewal, a place where native people sought guidance and where people now seek retreat. The four hundred and twenty acres of the ranch are now protected by a conservation easement that will ensure the timeless tonic of wilderness will remain intact for generations to come. “Protection of this property is simply the right thing to do, as defined by our mission,” says Carl Koch, Director of Ring Lake Ranch.

Ring Lake Ranch is home to a retreat center devoted to “renewal in a sacred wilderness.” At the heart of the facility is an outdoor chapel of log benches and an altar made from native stones. The chapel looks across the lake and into the wilderness of the Wind River Range, embodying the notion of spiritual renewal in the natural world.

Maggie Kahin, the ranch’s founder, first visited the Dubois area in 1936, and returned frequently over the years. When she began looking for a home in 1965, she considered several properties where she could operate a small guest ranch with a youth program. The next year, she purchased the land, built cabins, and the following



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now protected

summer opened the ranch as a retreat center with a program for young people. Ring Lake Ranch has grown into a respected nondenominational retreat center with participants attending from all over the world.

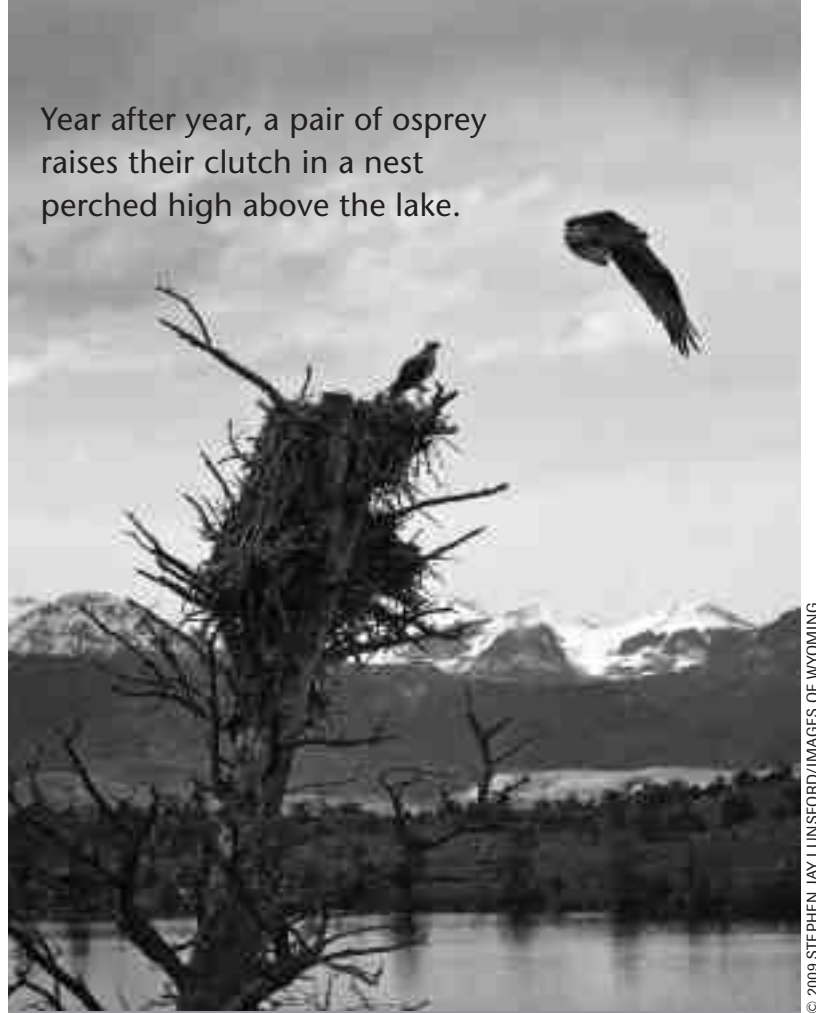
Maggie wasn't the first person to feel a spiritual connection to the place. Petroglyphs extend the length of Torrey Creek Valley, but the largest concentration occurs on the rock faces on Ring Lake Ranch. Not much was known about the petroglyphs when Maggie purchased the ranch. The etched pictures, which include bird-like figures, have since been studied by archaeologists who determined the majority were made by the Mountain Shoshone, also known as the Sheep Eaters, and are associated with a recently discovered high altitude village in the adjacent Wind River Range. These particular petroglyph panels were used by people seeking spiritual power through a vision quest. People would fast and pray for at least three days and three nights at these panels after ritual cleansing in a sweat lodge and the lake.

When the ranch's board of directors first considered protecting the property with a conservation easement, it seemed like a logical fit with the group's mission and the special qualities of the land. "After operating Ring Lake Ranch for over 40 years, we recognized the



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Year after year, a pair of osprey raises their clutch in a nest perched high above the lake.



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Torrey Creek Valley: A Community Treasure

Torrey Creek originates high in the granite and ice of the Fitzpatrick Wilderness. The boulder-strewn moraines and clear lakes on the valley floor confirm its glacial past. You can gaze down this drainage to where Torrey Creek flows into the Wind River and beyond this confluence to the red strata of the badlands formation and the distant and sharp Ramshorn Peak in the Absaroka Range.

Locals view the Torrey Creek Valley with great affection. Hunters know its value as winter habitat for all the large ungulates, including the iconic Whiskey Mountain bighorn sheep herd. Anglers of many ilk—from ice to fly—enjoy catching trout and ling in the valley's creeks and lakes. It is also a fine place for a Sunday drive any season of the year. The first field trip taken by Dubois students is a bus ride in kindergarten to the "Conservation Camp," an outdoor education facility at the far end of the Torrey Creek Valley operated by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. And at the end of the road is the Glacier Trailhead, a renowned thoroughfare for hikers, climbers, hunters, anglers, and outfitters into the wilderness and ultimately to Wyoming's highest point, Gannett Peak.

The property downstream from this well used trailhead is Ring Lake Ranch. "People stop me on the street to voice their support for protecting what they call 'a special place,'" said Wind River Program Director Ellen Vanuga. "Within this community there is a sense of responsibility for the treasures Ring Lake Ranch holds."

need to protect this sacred place and this gift from Maggie for perpetuity,” said Paul Vogelheim, former president of the Ring Lake Ranch Board and current Teton County Commissioner. “Last winter we began discussions with Jackson Hole Land Trust’s Wind River Program, first exploring deed restrictions to protect open space for our summer use and then learning more about the critical winter habitat our property offered.”

In addition to protection of the longstanding spiritual importance of the property, conservation of wildlife habitat on the ranch is significant. The ranch is a favorite home for elk, mule deer, moose, antelope, bighorn sheep, mountain lion and raptors. Year after year, a pair of osprey raises their clutch in a nest perched high above the lake. Ring Lake Ranch links adjacent protected properties and provides a valuable connection to the Whiskey Basin Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) which borders the property. Of primary concern is protection of habitat and migration areas used by the Whiskey Mountain bighorn sheep herd. In the past this was a vibrant population. A number of factors, including disease transmitted from domestic sheep and a reduction in quality winter habitat, has contributed to the herd’s decline. Although conserving agriculture is a central part of the Land Trust’s mission, a unique provision of this easement prohibits domestic sheep or goats on the property. This property is now permanently protected from both



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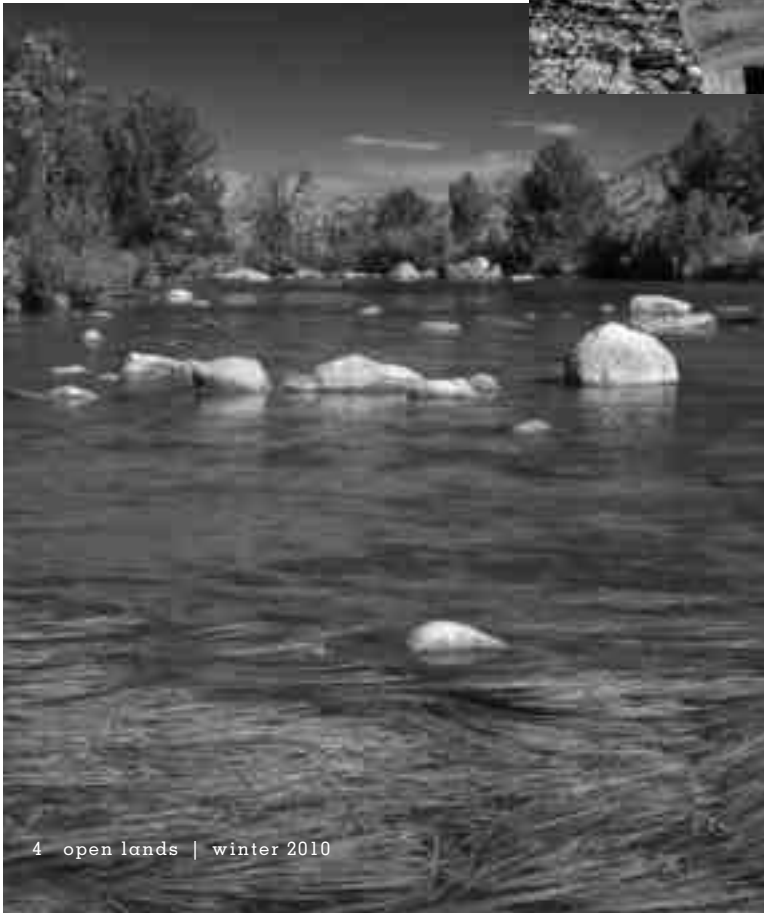
habitat loss and introduction of disease, which is a relief to wild sheep advocates.

Torrey Creek Valley’s mammals, raptors and fish are their own best ambassadors. The Land Trust was able to purchase the easement thanks to a cadre of funding partners: Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, Wyoming Governor’s Big Game Licenses Coalition, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation via The Nature Conservancy, National

Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center, and the Dubois Anglers and Wildlife Group.

In July, the ranch generously opened its gate for the Wind River Program Picnic to celebrate the protection of this special place. “We have been extremely pleased with the Jackson Hole Land Trust Wind River Program’s response and leadership in facilitating this amazing win-win,” said Vogelheim. “Maggie’s vision is now protected for the wildlife, for those of us living in this area, and for all the future guests who can experience renewal in sacred wilderness.”

The treasures of Ring Lake Ranch—petroglyphs, windswept vistas, densely vegetated lakeshores, winter forage and sanctuary for wildlife—are now all permanently protected while keeping the land in private hands. The new conservation easement at Ring Lake Ranch will safeguard these commonly held values, and the ranch will continue on with its current retreat operations, aiding people from far and wide in finding renewal in the wilds of the natural world. ■



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From the Director

I had the wonderful experience of floating a portion of the Grand Canyon this fall. The days meandered by, moving at the sinuous pace of the Colorado River, and the company and the scenery were spectacular. Returning to the Land Trust, I realized that the gift of travel had helped me see our organization from a new perspective. The story of the Colorado River is one of small creeks eventually turning into a mighty river, each drop of water collecting and joining to form something bigger than it was before. This collective enlargement is akin to our stewardship responsibilities that grow with each passing year. More acres under easement, means more time needed for performing our requisite functions that ensure land remains protected in perpetuity. I am proud of our land stewardship program and the many relationships we maintain with our landowners. I am also thrilled by the growing success in Dubois with the Wind River Program, illustrating the Land Trust's ability to work with a neighboring community to provide effective land conservation options. Our outreach effort to the communities of Fremont, Lincoln, and Park counties is taking the message of private land conservation to new places and audiences. I see these efforts along with our primary focus on the open lands of Jackson Hole as tributaries to the same river, common elements in the preservation of the natural values and open spaces we hold dear. The animals, air and water know no boundaries, and flow like a river from one county to the next. Tending to each individual place will only strengthen the current of conservation in western Wyoming.

— Laurie Andrews, Executive Director



The animals, air and water know no boundaries, and flow like a river from one county to the next.

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The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.

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BILL ASHLEY was inducted as an Emeritus Board Member in September for his contributions during the early years of the Land Trust. He served as the first Chairman of the Board from September, 1980 through October, 1981. His leadership and vision were instrumental in the formation of the Jackson Hole Land Trust, and we are honored by his continued presence with our organization.



Emeritus Board Members Bill Ashley (left) and Mike Wardell (right) chat about the good old days in the Land Trust office at Bill Ashley's emeritus party.

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**Meet Ellen Vanuga:
 Wind River Program Director**

The new face of the Wind River Program is Ellen Vanuga, who became Director in November 2008. For 15 years prior to joining the Jackson Hole Land Trust Wind River Program, Ellen organized and marketed international horseback riding holidays. One revealing observation she made when traveling abroad was encroachment on the world's farmlands and wild open spaces. "Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Kenya... everywhere I saw evidence of this. The locals were saddened by it, but had no means of influencing the outcome." Although Ellen loved her job, she felt a need to contribute to her local community. "Then an amazing thing happened. I was given a chance for meaningful work here in Dubois with the Land Trust. Now I am working with the valley's residents and landowners to balance economic opportunities with protection of our remarkably beautiful corner of the world."

For 22 years she has been serving on boards and panels, volunteering at the schools, and raising two Dubois High School graduates who hike, ride, hunt and fish. "I've lived here longer than I've lived anywhere including the sheep ranch where I grew up. These roots are deep, and I hope to make a positive contribution to the long-term well-being of the people, wildlife, ranchland, and scenery of this valley."

I am working with the people who live here to make a difference in our own remarkably beautiful corner of the world.

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TETON LEGACY SOCIETY

The individuals listed below have made provisions in their estate plans for the Jackson Hole Land Trust. We are deeply grateful for their commitment to safeguarding this valley:

Mary Andersen
Jeff Bland and Jane Mitchell
Louise Breitenbach and
Joe Piccoli
Tony and Linda Brooks
Ken and Mary Burdin
Mr. and Mrs. Doug Campbell
Bob and Becky Ciulla
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Coppola
Chic and Nina Cullen
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Dahl

We apologize for any errors or omissions we have made. Please call us (307) 733-4707 for corrections. This is a list of fiscal year supporters who made a gift between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009.

Welcome New Board Members



Jake Ankeny

Jake lives in South Park with his lovely wife Dana, and two beautiful daughters. Having grown up in Jackson, he greatly appreciates all that the area has to offer, especially the outdoor activities. Jake graduated from Montana State University with degrees in finance, economics and a minor in political science. Jake is involved with his family's construction business, Ankeny Construction Management. He is committed to keeping the area special by encouraging conservation, particularly when used as a tool within land development regulations.



Budd Betts

Budd has been a Wyoming resident for over forty years. He served in the Wyoming legislature as a House member from 1992-1998. Budd lives northwest of Dubois in the Dunoir Valley. He and his wife own and operate the Absaroka Ranch, a 700-acre dude ranch. He currently serves on the board of the Wyoming Community Foundation and the Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association. He is president of the National Bighorn Sheep Center in Dubois and is on the advisory committee for the Land Trust's Wind River Program.

Jeff Heilbrun

Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Jeff moved to Jackson Hole 23 years ago and has worked in the ski and golf industries. Jeff was employed in many capacities for Teton Pines Resort and Country Club over an 18-year period culminating in 9 years as General Manager. He left Teton Pines in 2005 to join a resort real estate sales and marketing consulting firm. Jeff also started Today's Leader, a leadership company specializing in pre-hire and development assessments for staff in multiple industries.

Garnett Smith

Garnett Smith and his wife Bitsy share their time between their home in Jackson at 3 Creek Ranch and Naples, Florida. Garnett is a graduate of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the retired Chairman and CEO of Inbrand Corp in Atlanta, Georgia. He currently serves as president of The Port Royal Club in Naples, Florida.





PHOTOS BY BO BOWMAN



Two workshops brought ranchers together to give concrete information about tax policy as it applies to conservation easements. A third event is being planned for this winter.

Land Trust Reaches Out to Western Wyoming

In an event that combined equal parts blue jeans and federal tax code, the Land Trust hosted a program in Park County on conservation easement tax issues for ranchers and other landowners over Labor Day weekend. The event, which was co-hosted with the Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust and Nic and Joyce Patrick, featured a discussion with Tim Lindstrom, legal counsel for the JHLT and a noted national authority on conservation easements and related tax issues.

Last winter, the Jackson Hole Land Trust agreed to collaborate with the state-wide stock growers land trust on a project to build momentum for private land conservation in the communities surrounding Jackson Hole. Many of these areas have seen their open lands disappear at a quickening rate as growth from Jackson and other population centers expands outward. The Cody event was one of three that the Jackson Hole Land Trust is hosting as a part of that collaboration, which is funded in part by a grant from the Heart of the Rockies Initiative. Another event took place in Star Valley over the summer, and a third event is being planned for Fremont County this winter.

Tim, who helped author a law that increased the federal tax incentives for the donation of conservation easements, used examples to show how a conservation easement can be used to keep a ranch together and in the family. He also talked about the campaign to extend enhanced incentives for easements, which are set to expire at the end of the year. Around thirty ranchers and other landowners attended the gathering at the Patrick Ranch along the scenic South Fork of the Shoshone River southwest of Cody.

“Tax policy on conservation easements can be a bit overwhelming when someone tries to read it in a book or a brochure,” said Executive Director Laurie Andrews. “With this program we wanted to provide concrete information that people could apply to their specific situations, and do it in a face-to-face setting where people could get answers to any questions they might have.”

The incentives for easement contribution increase the amount of income a donor is able to deduct from 30% to 50% and increase the number of years over which that deduction may be used from six to 16. There are currently bills in both houses of Congress that would make those enhanced benefits permanent.

Tim is the author of *A Tax Guide to Conservation Easements*, an information source for practitioners and landowners considering protecting their land with a conservation easement. *For a copy, or more information on conservation easement tax incentives, contact the Land Trust.*





**stewardship
equals
protection
over time**

The decision to protect a property with a conservation easement is striking and momentous.

The deal gets negotiated, the easement gets signed, the papers get put in

the appropriate places and land gets conserved through the generous and insightful acts of willing landowners. Then begin the actions of ongoing land protection, the daily measures the Land Trust takes to ensure that easements stand the test of time.

These lesser known, but equally important, daily acts of stewardship are vital to ensure the long term protection of these valuable assets that comprise the conservation landscape. As more acres become protected, the responsibility of upholding the easements and the values they protect grows. These significant agreements contain meaningful words to both human and animal alike and ultimately help to paint the picture of what the three dimensional landscape will look like in perpetuity. This picture has to be tended, monitored over time, shepherded through changes in landownership and family dynamics.

This defines the role of stewardship for the Jackson Hole Land Trust, the actions of land protection over time. Our easements span sagebrush covered hills, fir bedecked slopes, open hay meadows, and cottonwood river bottoms. Each is unique in the land it protects and requires a distinct and personal relationship. Each easement is also a cherished asset to the Jackson Hole Land Trust, for each protects the stories of families, the lines of rivers, the seasonal flux of the cottonwood forest, the cycle of haying, and corridors for wildlife. There is much to consider when a landowner signs

an easement, and in turn, much for the stewardship staff to consider when working to uphold the story of each property through time.

With over 100 landowner relationships to tend to, representing nearly 200 different easement protected parcels, the JHLT stewardship staff is in constant motion. Responding to landowner requests throughout the year is of primary importance to the stewardship staff and comprises the majority of their work time. As landowners manage their properties, the desire to make changes arises, be it a longer driveway or new fencing, vegetation alterations or an extensive habitat enhancement. Often, landowners need to consult with the Land Trust to confirm that the desired action complies with the conservation easement. There are no blanket answers to even the most frequently asked questions, since each easement is distinct. Each of the nearly 200 easements is individually written based on the conservation values it is intended to protect, as well as the desires of the landowner who contributed the conservation easement. Many approvals are straightforward, since most landowners have a working knowledge of their conservation easements. Other projects require more thorough review to evaluate the request in the context of the property's conservation values. Responding with timeliness is imperative, as landowners are often eager to begin their projects.

As land stewards, the most enriching part of the job is getting to know these properties over time. Summer brings field visits with landowners and an opportunity to walk these wonderful spreads. Stewardship staff strives to meet in person with landowners or ranch managers to discuss any contemplated changes and take note of significant natural occurrences. Getting to visit private land and witness the profusion of summer wildflowers and towering green gentian,



Left: Steffan Freeman monitors a property on West Gros Ventre Butte.
Center: Land stewards get to view properties from many unique angles. Walton Ranch as seen from the top of Hansen Peak.
Right: Tom Segerstrom atop East Gros Ventre Butte during a monitoring visit.

or the quietude of a wetland at dawn, is a cherished part of the land steward’s working year. Field time is where stewards gain an intimate understanding of the ecological functions of these easement protected properties. Observations are documented back in the office and become a record of the phenology of a property over time for a future land steward to reference. These simple routine gestures of yearly documentation ensure the conservation values of a property are honored at every turn of the way.

Above all else, it is the human relationships that ultimately dictate what happens on the land. Written agreements are gold, but a functional long-term relationship with the landowner is platinum. The stewardship staff strives to take a kitchen-table approach to discussions, preferring in person meetings when possible. The relationships intertwined with these remarkable protected parcels are best nurtured through timely, responsive, and individual care. Throughout the course of the year, a landowner will have at least four points of communication with the stewardship staff, and many more if a large project is being implemented. Multiply this by over 100 landowners and counting, and the daily work of the land stewards becomes apparent. This growing responsibility is work we are honored to do.

There is much to consider when a landowner signs an easement, and in turn, much for the stewardship staff to consider when working to uphold the story of each property through time.

Accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Jackson Hole Land Trust is proud to announce that we have been accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. While our copy machine is still reeling from the incredible volume of documentation we had to produce for this feat, the Land Trust now has the distinction of being one of 82 land trusts to become accredited out of more than 1,600 groups nationwide.



The Land Trust underwent an extensive external review of our governance, management policies, and the systems we use to protect and steward land. After producing the necessary documentation a rigorous phone interview was conducted by the commission before Jackson Hole Land Trust was awarded accreditation.

The accreditation process has helped strengthen our policies and procedures while giving us the unique opportunity to examine our organization for best practices alongside other land trusts. As we have known, Jackson Hole Land Trust is exceptionally strong in the area of stewarding lands in perpetuity, which was reinforced by the commissioners upon review of our stewardship practices.

To retain our accreditation, the Land Trust will have to complete a follow-up review in five years.

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(THE CM AND EA RANCHES) BY ELLEN VANUGA; HARDEMAN MEADOWS CUTOUTS BY MARY GERTY.

keep up with our work at jhlandtrust.org

